

## Voluntary use of filtering facepiece respirators (N95) for COVID-19

The employer must determine if respirators are necessary to protect the health of employees. If the employer determines employees do not need to wear respirators to protect their health and the employer does not require employees to use respirators, the use of filtering facepiece respirators (such as N95s) would be considered voluntary.

Assistance in making this determination can be found in the following publications:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic – [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html) (or the current version); and
- CDC Guidance for Direct Service Providers – [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/humandevelopment/covid-19/guidance-for-direct-service-providers.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/humandevelopment/covid-19/guidance-for-direct-service-providers.html).

## Respiratory protection program for voluntary use of filtering facepiece respirators

Employers requiring respirators for protection against COVID-19 must comply with 29 CFR 1910.134, Respiratory protection, at [www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134](http://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134).

If the employer determines the use of filtering facepiece respirators is voluntary, they must comply with [1910.134\(c\)\(2\)\(i\)](#). The employer must determine the use of the respirators will not cause harm and provide employees with the information in Appendix D of the standard, *Information for employees using respirators when not required under standard*.

In determining if a respirator will not cause harm, the employer must decide if use of a filtering facepiece respirator could cause a greater hazard to the employee than not wearing one. For example, where an employee would be exposed to other hazards or conditions in the workplace (such as hazardous chemicals or heat) that may be exacerbated by the wearing of a respirator.

If voluntary use of respirators other than filtering facepiece respirators is allowed, the employer must implement a limited written program addressing medical determinations and cleaning, storage and maintenance, and provide Appendix D to their employees (see [1910.134\(c\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#)).

## Masks and respirators

For information about types of masks and respirators, see: CDC Types of Masks and Respirators – [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html).

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